

Colorado



...a healthy place to live, work, play

Department Operations Center Provides Coordination During Emergencies

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment completed construction on a dual-use facility to house its Department Operations Center in January 2005. The function and facility of the DOC provides an incident management structure that is NIMS-compliant and provides for the core functions of Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Administration and Finance.

In addition to its function as a departmental level emergency operations center, the facility is used frequently for trainings and meetings, making use of the unique technology available in the center.



Department Operations Center Technology

The available communication technology includes a two-line telephone system, 62 phones and one PBX, with access for up to 72 telephone lines; 41 notebook computers with computer workstations for up to 50, with a computer charging system; large-screen (projection) television with four-channel viewing; satellite subscription television service; video and audio conferencing capabilities; VHS/DVR record and playing capabilities; fax; and an 800 MHz radio base station with 20 portable handsets that are continually charged. To address the noise issues that are common

in emergency operations centers, the department installed a system that allows users to listen to television audio on headset receivers. The headsets also allow hands-free telephone use. A mobile electronic whiteboard and numerous stationary whiteboards are installed. The adjacent training center expands the resources by 12 workstations.

Department Operations Center Information Management

The DOC operations are managed through the use of a computer-based information management system. The system facilitates the process for gathering and recording data and intelligence, tracking and accounting for resources, cost accounting associated with resource utilization and emergency management actions, and it provides a secure means for exchanging reports and information between the department and local public health agencies.



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South, Denver, CO 80246-1530
www.cdphe.state.co.us 303.692.2700 800.886.7689

After much research and discussions with the Colorado Division of Emergency Management, it was determined that purchasing an off-the-shelf product or developing an independent information management system for the DOC would not be cost-effective. Department staff who serve as liaisons to the Colorado Division of Emergency Management have access to its web-based *WebEOC*. This information management system links with a resource-tracking database that can be exported to an offsite database at the department. As the Colorado Division of Emergency Management is the lead for resource tracking, the department will coordinate with Emergency Management to make resource requests.

In the absence of a system being provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the department monitors electronic information through the department's secured Novell Groupwise e-mail system; tracks all resources through a Microsoft Access database; and utilizes the Colorado Health Alert Network portal, the department's secure, web-based portal, to share and post information for response partners and the local health departments and nursing services. Information also is shared through the Dialogics NxT Communicator notification system and the Colorado Health Alert Network.

The identified processes are detailed in the DOC Operations Manual, which is undergoing testing in the department's tabletop avian influenza exercise in October 2006, and the follow-up functional exercise in December 2006.

Lessons Learned

Recent experiences during actual emergencies and exercises serve as the foundation for further development of the response system, including the proposed information management system.

Originally, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment installed a custom-made information management system for documentation and information sharing purposes. Due to incompatibility issues with other agencies, the department researched off-the-shelf systems that would meet the functionality requirements. The department did not find one system that met all of its needs, was economically feasible and was user-friendly. The use of multiple systems as detailed above is being tested through exercises.



Emergency Communications Center

Adjacent to the Department Operations Center is the department's multi-purpose Emergency Communications Center.

While most frequently used as a meeting room for department functions, the Emergency Communications Center is easily converted to its communications purpose with the cabling and connections needed for six computer and telephone workstations. There are four televisions permanently mounted in the room, with digital videorecording capabilities. Video and audio conferencing from the main Department Operations Center is channeled to the communications center as well, so that emergency public information staff are kept informed. The facility can serve as a small joint information center as well, in a public health event or an event managed through a unified command structure.



**Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment**



NIMS Compliance

The department demonstrated full compliance with NIMS incident command structure requirements during its activation for “Operation Safe Haven” during and after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The department exercised its capacity to perform all core functions during Operation Safe Haven.

Supporting Documents

- Department Operations Center room layout
- Department Operations Center manual (available on request)



**Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment**

Additional Information

Lynette Schick
303-692-2686 or lynette.schick@state.co.us

Barbara J. Beiser, Editor
303-692-2710 or barbara.beiser@state.co.us

July 2007